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ABSTRACT

This two-part paper based on experience at the University of Michigan includes a discussion of the potential reference function of a residence hall library in a university setting and a bibliography of over 100 suggested reference tools for residence hall libraries. The residence hall library is presented as a place where students should be able to obtain not only recreational reading but also basic factual information, instruction in the use of library reference materials, and guidance as to the holdings and use of other libraries on campus. The bibliography is arranged by Dewey Decimal Classification and includes guides, encyclopedias, dictionaries, almanacs, atlases, directories, handbooks, and other basic reference works which would be useful in a residence hall library setting. (Author/ESR)

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THE REFERENCE FUNCTION IN A RESIDENCE HALL LIBRARY

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Houston Public Library

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Preface

The author had the advantage of serving as a Head Librarian in the residence hall library system of The University of Michigan while studying for the A.M.L.S. degree at the School of Library Science of the same institution. This experience widened his view of the profession and greatly eased his transition to a position as a Reference Librarian in the Houston Public Library System. Part of this experience was the formulation of guidelines for the development of reference collections for residence hall libraries. The purpose of this paper is to briefly discuss the potential reference function of a residence hall library and to present a suggested acquisition list.

The Reference Function in a Residence Hall Library

The residence hall library should serve as a bridge between the student and the university library system in addition to its equally important function as a source of intellectual expansion and recreational reading materials. The reference function should seek to meet the following objectives:

a- it should provide basic factual information through the use of the sources in the collection;

b- it should provide instruction in the use of the reference materials in the library; and

c- the widest possible access to the holdings of the other libraries on campus should be provided to the students served by the residence hall library.

Methodologies for meeting these objectives may vary depending on the needs, strengths, and weaknesses of the particular situation but the following suggestions should have wide applicability. The staff of the library must be familiarized with the reference collection. A planned program of orientation should be implemented which might be included as a regular feature in staff meetings. Questions, especially those not answerable in the residence hall library, should be recorded as an aid in future acquisitions. Instruction in the content and use of reference sources should be expanded to the students. This can include passive instructional signs or workbooks,

advertised seminars on particularly relevant sources, and recreational devices such as trivia contest sheets which give practice in using the collection. The final objective is one whose implementation depends on the available modes of access to the university library system. At the very least the residence hall library staff should be given a walking tour through the main library facilities of the campus. The residence hall library should have a list of the libraries on campus, their hours, general areas of holdings, and any peculiarities in circulating priviledges or other important aspects limiting use. Union lists of serials should be in the library if available. In an age which sees the growing use of fiche and on-line catalogs the complete holdings of the university library system may soon be available in the residence hall library. This would be a great advance for all concerned: the student would have access to a record of the university's holdings in a convenient setting; the residence hall library program would be better integrated into the academic life of the campus; and, the university library system would be used more efficiently. Students would have tremendous flexibility in planning their research and library use in light of schedule, distance, and need. This may become expecially helpful at universities where hours are curtailled due to financial constraints as residence hall libraries are usually less costly to operate for extended hours.

In summary, while not diminishing the recreational

reading function or the role of the residence hall library as a vehicle for cultural and intellectual exposure, the reference function of these libraries has great potential. It can serve as a point of further integration of the residence hall library into the academic experience of the student.

A Suggested Reference Bibliography

The following list of reference sources is arranged by rounded Dewey classification. The specific needs of a given situation may dictate adjustment but this list should meet most of the demands of the residence hall population in a broad range of subjects.

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